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The Character of the Discipler
Titus 2:3a
Series: *Adorning the Doctrine of God*

Introduction: Well, none of you left – at least not that I can tell – so you are all very kind to me. Go ahead and take your Bible and join me in Titus 2. We are going to dig into Titus 2:3-5 in the next two sessions as we seek to grow in adorning the doctrine of God. So, we have seen the cornerstone of discipleship. It is grace teaching us to live counter-culturally as we walk in the faith and knowledge and hope that accords with sound doctrine. Delightful doctrine and earnest duty go hand in hand. Because of grace we are now zealous for good works – or are at least growing in our zeal for good works. And as we enter into chapter 2 we see that Titus is to instruct the older men and the older women to be about the business of teaching and training the younger men and younger women, respectively. So, the older men and older women are to be zealous for good works in this way. They are to adorn the doctrine of God in this way. They display the glorious beauty of the Gospel when they give themselves to the benefit of the next generation.

And this is totally counter-cultural in so many ways – which so much of Scripture is. It is counter-cultural in that this model of older teaching younger values age and wisdom over youth and energy. This is the exact opposite of our culture. We throw away age and discard their wisdom. We have become child and youth centered in our cultural values and this has made us much less mature and stable, hasn't it?

It is also counter-cultural in that it turns us from self-interest and independence to true community and dependence upon others – and especially of dependence upon those who are different from us. This has been one of the greatest lies of Western Civilization, and in particular in the last 50-75 years. The individual has climbed to the top of the totem pole of societal thought and now reigns over all other concerns in life. What the individual says is true and important cannot be thwarted by the concerns and values of the community. The community is always captive now to the needs, desires, and even whims of the individual. And what the

individual wants and needs can be provided for without any contact at all with others in our media savvy age. And this way of thinking has infiltrated each of us more than we even recognize. And this way of thinking has distorted our understanding of doctrine and our living of lives that are in accord with sound doctrine. So, we have made it totally possible in the American church to be a Christian who attends a service with others, puts on a nice smile and acts like everything is okay, while hiding the deepest struggles and concerns of the heart and having no meaningful contact with other Christians. Beloved, that is not the picture painted in the Scriptures of what it means to be a Christian and to be a part of Christ's Church. Rather, as we see in this text, we have the awesome privilege and sacred responsibility of giving ourselves to one another – that is what it looks like to be a Christian. It looks like cross-generational investment, concern, dependence, and discipleship.

And this is the glorious Gospel worked out into the context of life. So, just think for a minute about how sin entered into the world in the Garden in Genesis 3. The harmony of relationship and the interpersonal interest between Adam and Eve gave way to self-protection and self-defense at the expense of the other. Individualism is the rotten fruit of the tree of sinful rebellion. And this is seen in Adam & Eve's offspring as well. So, in chapter 4, in the first account of interpersonal relationships between their sons – we see sin's rotten fruit once again. Cain refuses to admit guilt before the Lord in bringing an unacceptable sacrifice, and rather sees Abel as the problem, rather than his own disobedience. Then Cain kills him and when the Lord asks about him Cain says – “Am I my brother's keeper?” This is the motto of self-centered individualism – Am I my brother's or sister's keeper? If our cultural tune is Frank Sinatra's song – I did it my way – then our cultural motto is – Am I my brother's keeper?

Into that darkness enters the glorious light of the Gospel. The Gospel takes us from the rebellious sinfulness which says – Am I my sister's keeper – to the grace-saturated investment described in Titus 2. This is discipleship. This is the fulfillment of the “one another” commands of Scripture. This is adorning the Gospel of God in the context of everyday living. So, what does that look like? Well, Paul starts with an explanation of the character of the discipler – the older woman. So, he instructs Titus to teach them about these things. This is not an exhaustive list of all of the ways older women need to be concerned about adorning the doctrine of God. But rather it is a fine-tuned list of the most

important things relating to each role and situation. So, the things listed in verse 3 are especially needful in older ladies.

And, by the way – if you think I am about to define who is older and who is younger by stating an age – you are greatly mistaken! The assumption of the text is that the older women have a good amount of life experience under their belts. You could even argue that these are the ladies who no longer have children at home. But in the least they are those who are mature in life and are then to be mature in the faith. And what should this maturity look like? Well, let's read, starting in verse 1, and down through verse 5.

I want to dig into this with 4 headings. So, the character of the discipler is to be one of becoming behavior, supportive speech, disciplined desires, and godly guiding.

I. Becoming Behavior

- a. This idea of becoming behavior is the first thing given in verse 3. Older women are to be reverent in behavior. The words in the original convey the idea of having a lifestyle that is fitting with what is sacred and holy. The word for behavior means more than just actions. It goes to the depth of your deportment or demeanor. So, it is not just what you do, but also how you do it and why you do it. So, these older women are to be living life in such a way, that *what* they do and say, and *how* they do it and how they say it, and *why* they do and say it is fitting with the Gospel they claim.
- b. In other words, older ladies, as your bodies begin to deteriorate and grow weaker, the fleshing out of your faith should be all the stronger. You have had all these years of life and experience to test and prove the will of God. You have had years upon years – decades for many of you – to not be conformed to the world's way of thinking and to be transformed by the renewing of your minds. This is good and right and acceptable to God. This is what grace does. Over a lifetime it teaches us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions. As you have had years to gaze upon Christ you have learned to be self-controlled, upright, and godly. You have learned to live out the new life you have been given.

- c. And the younger women who are walking behind you through this journey of life need to see a life that has undergone the powerful transformation of the gospel. They don't need to see a body that has undergone the power of plastic surgery or a life lived under the controlling power of money and prestige. Rather, they need to see a life radically altered in its demeanor and deportment by saving and sanctifying grace. One where every thought, every word, every action is shaped by the glorious grace of Christ. Where every attitude and struggle and hardship is given over to the Lordship of Christ. Where every role and responsibility and menial task is informed by the glorious hope of Christ. The discipler needs to have this becoming behavior.

II. Supportive Speech

- a. Next, we are told that she is not to be a slanderer. To put it positively, she is to have supportive speech as opposed to accusatory speech. This is what is at the heart of slander – it is the words which accuse someone else of something. It is most often done behind someone's back to another person and it is based upon a small piece of information which then is ballooned by assumption into a blimp of accusation!
- b. This Greek word is “diabolos” – which is most often used to identify the devil himself throughout Scripture. So, this slandering is what the Devil did to Job. Absent of Job's knowledge and without Job being able to bring anything to his own defense, Satan attacked Job's character. He took what he could see and twisted it to fit his own narrative and then spewed that narrative to the God of Heaven. “Job only maintains faithfulness to you because you are so good to him.” Which is code for “Job is a lousy schmuck who only loves your gifts!” Slander can sound so germane and normal and inoffensive. But at its heart, it is completely satanic and devilish.
- c. And while men are more prone to sin with their bodies, women are more prone to sin with their mouths. Most ladies like to talk and assess and process life with someone else. And this processing among friends often leads down sinful paths of gossip and slander. These are two bedfellows by the way – gossip and slander. They are best buddies who are hardly ever apart from one another. Where gossip enters in – “Hey did you hear about?”, then slander is soon to follow –

“yeah, I don’t know what they were thinking?” Small bits of information tempt us to give an opinion on those small bits of information. And have you ever noticed that this never ends positively for the one we are talking about? We always end up at a negative conclusion, but by the grace of God. We do that because slander is simply another tool in the tool belt of pride. It is just another way to prop myself up by standing on the smoldering remains of someone else’s ruined reputation.

- d. We must be diligent to guard our tongues from slander and gossip. This is the testimony all throughout the Scriptures. So, just to recite a few:
 - i. ¹⁸ The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool. (Prov. 10:18 ESV)
 - ii. ²⁰ For lack of wood the fire goes out, and where there is no whisperer, quarreling ceases. ²¹ As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man for kindling strife. ²² The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels; they go down into the inner parts of the body. (Prov. 26:20-22 ESV)
 - iii. ²³ Whoever keeps his mouth and his tongue keeps himself out of trouble. (Prov. 21:23 ESV)
 - iv. ²⁹ Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. (Eph. 4:29 ESV)
 - v. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. (Matt. 12:34b ESV)
- e. So, your words are evidence, or fruit of your heart. And, older ladies, the thought of this text is that you will not give yourself over to this wicked speech which is fueled by pride and feasts upon others. This is especially tempting in our later years because the cynicism of life seems to grow as we increase in life experience. We have been hurt a lot and we have had almost everyone disappoint us and have even had some attempt to destroy us. So, it is an easy path to walk down to get to slandering almost anyone. It does not take us long to assume sinful motives or to presume that someone is evil or deceptive. And it doesn’t take much effort to share that with a friend. My dear sisters – this beast of slander ought not be given any oxygen in the Body of Christ. This is where slander ought to come to die. We must slay this

beast by stopping our lips and by gently restraining one another. When was the last time you had to go back to someone and ask them to forgive you for how you talked about someone else? If it hasn't been recently, then I would suggest that you are probably not as sensitive about this as you need to be. This sin is so easy and so prevalent in our hearts that we must always be on guard against it. And older ladies, this must be especially true of you. Lead the younger ladies in this way. Adorn the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ by refusing to tolerate pride-filled hate speech against any member of His Bride.

III. Disciplined Desires

- a. Next, Paul addresses disciplined desires. So, these older women are to have becoming behavior and supportive speech, and now disciplined desires. Paul says, they are not to be slaves to much wine. Paul is addressing a common societal problem. Mankind has always been prone to give ourselves over to controlling and enslaving desires. He focuses on wine because that was the most easily accessible substance of the day. But in our day this singular dandelion has blossomed and spread its seed and now the whole grassy knoll of life is filled with yellow dandelions. The options are limitless for substances that meet some desire through physical satisfaction. The use of these substances then goes from being a servant of a need or desire to becoming the master. This transaction happens slowly, but surely as one enjoys the luring pleasure of some behavior. And it is not always an illicit behavior. But without self-control, it slowly moves from slave to lord.
- b. So, Paul calls them to not be addicted to much wine. They had to drink wine – it was part of the staple of their diet. They all drank wine – which was much different than the wine that is available today, but that is a conversation for another day. But it was a temptation for this normal thing of life which was to be a servant of their own physical well-being to become a demanding and harmful master. This addictive and controlling substance is to not have mastery over Christ's people. This kind of behavior and unhindered desires do not mesh with the Gospel which has saved us.
- c. So 1 Peter 2:24-25 says this:
 - i. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you

have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Pet. 2:24-25 ESV)

- d. We have been freed from the mastery of our sinful desires, and we have been given freedom in the redemption of Christ. And God has designed in the body of Christ for the older women to exemplify this freedom for the younger women. The younger women need to see in living color that the culture around them is lying to them. They need to see that our tendency to be enslaved by controlling desires is not the path to real and lasting joy and peace and satisfaction. And you, older ladies, are the perfect ones to show them this. By fleshing out this freedom in the context of everyday life you pull back the curtains on this deceitful master and you expose it for what it is. And you show, by your life that enslavement to Christ by grace is where there is abundance of life.

IV. Godly Guiding

- a. Lastly, Paul calls these older ladies to godly guiding at the end of verse 3. He says that these older women are to teach what is good. This is actually not a verb in the original, but an adjective. They are to be teachers of what is good – as the King James says – teachers of good things. Since this is an adjective which describes their lives and not a verb which gives them something to do – we can deduce that every older woman is a teacher. She might not be teaching good things, but she is teaching. So, this is in many ways the heartbeat of this text. These older women in the church family are teachers, whether they like it or not. So, they must adorn the doctrine of God and live lives which accord with the gospel so that they teach what is good to the younger women in the body.
- b. So, the lives of these older women in the church are guides for the younger. And Paul says that they are to be guides for what is good, or we could carry in the idea of godliness here. The life of faith, knowledge of the truth, and hope in eternal life accords with a life of godliness which then teaches the next generation about the veracity of this gospel – the truthfulness of it.
- c. Richard Cecil was a famous English Preacher in the 1700 and 1800's. In his youth he was hardened to Christianity and pursued the path of rebellion by reading illicit books until he could break free from his

parents and go his own way. Eventually, he returned to repentance and true belief in Christ. And what was it that won him back? He said that he was proud of all of the arguments that he had against Christianity, but he said – “There was one argument I never could get over – the influence and life of a holy mother.”

- d. In other words – the veracity of the Gospel was driven home in his life by the character of his own mother. He saw her at home. He saw her at her worst and at her best. He saw her in joy and in sorrow. He saw her in pain and in gladness. He saw her in abundance and in need. He saw her in anger and in contentment. He saw her in the church and in the marketplace and in the kitchen. And she taught him what was good by her example. She led the way for him back to the foot of the Cross.

Conclusion: This is what is needed today in our church family. We need godly women who live out their faith and prove the truthfulness of the Gospel. We need women who are trained by the grace they know and prove it through becoming behavior, and supportive speech, and disciplined desires, and godly guidance in life.

So, as we close, let’s return to the case study that I mentioned at the end of our first session. A young lady has come to you and has spilled her life story to you as one of great sorrow and pain from the sins of others and of her own choices. She is saying things like – “I just can’t take the pressure anymore. I need a release valve.” And so, she has found that inflicting pain on herself allows for a quick release of the pain she feels inside. As she watches the blood flow out of her freshly inflicted wound she feels like her internal pain is released. So, I ask you again – what do you say to this young lady? What is the core of her problem? Are you able to help her? Now, remember, I am using an extreme example so as to avoid any association, but I could fill in less inflammatory details of this scenario and it would fit with many in this room. So, older ladies – is this your responsibility? Is it time to pass her off to the “professionals?” Are you your sister’s keeper at that point? Or, should you just say to her – “I am so sorry you are facing this, and please know that I am praying for you, but I don’t know how to help you anymore.”

Well – in a partial answer – there is an intuitive reason she has sought you out. She may not be able to verbalize it, but she sees in you something she needs. So, to drop her at this point and pass her off to the professionals would be to take away

one of God's primary means of discipleship – the relationship in the church between generations. She has seen your life and your godliness. She was drawn to you by your becoming behavior and your supportive speech and your disciplined desires and your godly guidance. She is not a burden but an opportunity.

And this is true of all of the lesser ways in which the younger generation is looking to you. They are being taught by grace that they need more than the pooled ignorance of their own generation. So, when they approach you and say – hey, I was wondering if we could maybe meet together once a week, or even once over other week, or even once a month and talk about life and about God and about the Scriptures and pray together – don't see this as yet another burden to carry or another responsibility to fulfill, but see it as the glorious opportunity that it is. God has put the two of you together for a reason in the same body and has drawn her to you and you to her. You are a part of her pathway to spiritual maturity. And I for one cannot think of a greater privilege in the Church! Let's pray!